



Big Gain for a Small Town

Progress Lives on in Maryville, Missouri

by Jim McDonald

Residents of the northwestern Missouri town of Maryville, population 10,663, might not think of their hometown as a state leader. But years ago, that's exactly how the late Stephanie Erdman saw Maryville. She saw a day where any person might sit down in any restaurant in town and breathe nothing more dangerous than the aroma of good cooking. Nowadays, a local volunteer coalition named Citizens for a Smoke Free Nodaway County draws on Stephanie's memory and inspiration in their quest to make Maryville the first town in Missouri to officially ban tobacco pollution from inside all city restaurants.

For her job as a health educator at the Nodaway County Health Department, Stephanie was an early crusader for tobacco use prevention, and many who remember her say she was even more. "She was the heart and soul (of tobacco prevention)," is the way Della Rhodes, Administrator of the Nodaway County Health Department remembers her. "She laid the groundwork for this Coalition

more than eight years ago," said Coalition member Julie Livengood, a health educator with the county, "it just shows that this process takes a lot of people and a lot of time."

The coalition's present-day roster embraces a wide range of Maryville occupations

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as well as residents from surrounding Nodaway County towns. The coalition is made up of health professionals, educators, students, law enforcement personnel, business people, retirees, community activists, and administrators. It's a far cry from the early days of tobacco prevention in Nodaway County when it was just a couple of health educators out doing their jobs.

One of Stephanie Erdman's co-workers in those days was Jamie Baker. Jamie is the

coalition's representative of the state's Tobacco Use Prevention Program. Her official title is Tobacco Use Prevention Regional Resource Specialist. Jamie started in tobacco prevention helping Stephanie promote prevention of youth access sometime around 1997. Work on the area's first smoke-free dining guide followed sometime in 1998. "We made presentations to the Chamber of Commerce and all the community service groups, and basically any community group that would listen," Jamie said.

In 1998 the management of the A & G Restaurant had gone smoke free for the Great American Smoke Out and then just decided to go smoke free from then on. "We really were too shy to ask a place like that (A & G) to go completely smoke free," Jamie said. "But after that, the A & G became our ace in the hole."

Other establishments followed the lead of the A & G and soon the crusaders could see they had a winning formula.

The next big break came when the chain restaurants started going smoke free. The local

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Upcoming

St. Louis—
Feb 19-21,
17th National Conference
on Chronic Disease
Prevention and Control
(703) 538-1798;
king@chronicdisease.org

St. Louis—
Feb 18, Noon, Jefferson
County Coalition's 4th
annual Smoke-free Dining
Award to Pasta House in
High Ridge.

Columbia—
March 2-4, Workshop:
"Building Political Power
For Clean Indoor Air;"
(573) 634-5165

Jefferson City—
March 18, 19; Workshop:
"Empowering Missouri
Communities to Clear the
Air of Secondhand Smoke;"
(573) 522-2820

Meet the New Assistant Chief

The new assistant chief of the Bureau of Health Promotion (BHP) is Kathleen Simpson. A lifelong resident of Jefferson City, Kathleen is married and has three children.

Kathleen brings more than twenty years of experience in public health administration to her new position. She began her career in program development and quality assurance with the Department of Social Services. From there she was an assistant chief in Environmental Health & Communicable Disease at the Missouri Department of Health. And lastly she worked as grants administrator for the City of

Saint Louis Department of Health.

The focus of Kathleen's formal education was on health services management and public administration while at the University of Missouri, and organizational communications while at Southwest Missouri State University.

For personal background, Kathleen said she tries to be as boring as possible and conducts herself like she was enrolled in the federal witness protection program, which is testimony to an active sense of humor—an important asset in the business of tobacco use prevention.

Two Mid-Missouri Spring Workshops Tackle CIA

Similar subjects, similar goals—different approaches

The DHSS Tobacco Use Prevention Program and the Missouri Partnership on Smoking or Health have joined forces to offer training for communities interested in reducing secondhand smoke in public places. The Partnership is sponsoring a workshop on March 2-4 at the Holiday Inn Select in Columbia, and the DHSS Tobacco Use Prevention Program follows with training on March 18-19 at the Rickman Center in Jefferson City.

The Partnership training, "Building Political Power for Clean Indoor Air" is designed to help communities organize for conducting successful campaigns to restrict exposure to secondhand smoke in public places through adoption of local ordinances. Community leaders and coalition members interested in learning the political process for direct action organizing should attend this workshop.

The DHSS workshop, "Empowering Missouri Communities to Clear the Air of Secondhand Smoke" provides the specific content necessary to successfully conduct public education about the dangers of exposure to secondhand smoke, including how to work with the local media to get the message across. It also includes strategies and a Missouri case study for working with restaurants and other public places to encourage voluntary adoption of smoke-free policies.

"Building Political Power"

www.smokingorhealth.org

Telephone: 573/634-5165

"Empowering Communities"

www.dhss.state.mo.us/SmokingAndTobacco/smoke_workshop_reg.htm

Telephone: 573/522-2820

We're Listening

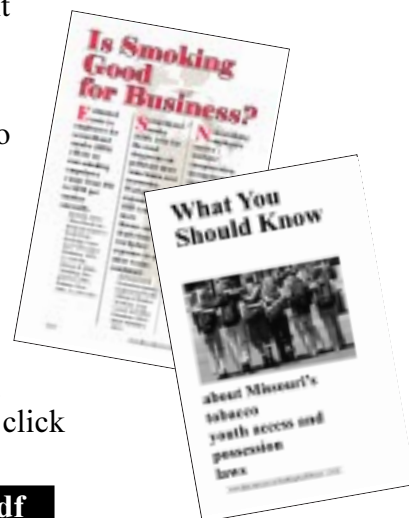
All the feedback we got on the last issue of the Update indicated some version of the same thing: "Too much, too big." So we've cut down on the prose and focused a bit more. Please keep the constructive criticism coming. It is crucial to the process.

Do-It-Yourself Pamphlets

The Missouri Tobacco Use Prevention Program is redesigning some of the more requested fact sheets so they can be downloaded from the program's web page and easily and inexpensively converted into re-usable pamphlets. The file in which these documents are located contains instructions for making pamphlets using nothing more than a black and white printer, a copy machine, and a stapler. The re-designed titles completed thus far include, "Is Smoking Good for Business," and "What You Should Know about Missouri's tobacco youth access and possession laws."

access and possession laws." Next to be included will be "What You Should Know About Missouri's Clean Indoor Air Law."

These pamphlets are designed to reproduce using basic office, or even home, equipment at a minimal cost to users. The graphics are intended to reproduce well in either color or black and white and to be serviceable even when using low resolution systems. To access the do-it-yourself pamphlet page, click on the address below.



www.dhss.state.mo.us/SmokingAndTobacco/PamphletInstructions.pdf

Big gains

(from pg. 1)

Hardees, for instance, was a smoker's haven. It was a spot where, long after finishing a meal, folks tended to sit and share—news, views and secondhand smoke. It was a local tradition, albeit a very unhealthy one.

"When the chain restaurants like Hardees started going (smoke free)," Jamie said, "a lot of coalition members started saying things like, 'Look around, it's how everything's going.' And that's when we all started to get excited," Jamie said. "We started thinking, hey, maybe we can do more."

That's when the coalition members started thinking big. They started thinking beyond individual establishments. They started thinking public policy.

They invited the mayor to one of their regular coalition meetings and asked him what they needed to do to pass a city ordinance banning smoking in all Maryville restaurants.

The coalition members knew the mayor was supportive, based on statements he had made concerning their progress in getting individual restaurants to go smoke free. Indeed the mayor was supportive and re-enforced their confidence concerning how he might vote when the time came.

When invited to make a presentation to the city council, the coalition

members followed the advice they'd been given and decided not to pitch a sample ordinance to the council without first establishing the need. The concern was that individual councilmen would get hung up on debating legal trivia and lose sight of the ultimate goal—safeguarding public health. They opted instead for education and a show of community support. The coalition managed to recruit an impressive line-up of people willing to testify in support of smoke-free restaurants in

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Several coalition members testified, including the coalition's designated spokesperson, Teri Harr, who is Health Education Coordinator for St. Francis Hospital and Health Services. Also, they had a representative from the local health department, members of several local youth groups, letters from other local youth groups, letters from local restaurant owners, and the owner/manager of the local Long John Silvers restaurant.

And even though coalition members felt the presentation went very well, they learned

that the most important element for success still is patience. With all that community support and all those facts supporting them, they had hoped that council members would say, okay, draw up an ordinance.

"Didn't happen," Jamie said. "Instead, they took the issue under advisement."

So the city council tabled the issue pending more community input. Then other issues clouded the water. Someone in city hall found a sample ordinance on the Internet and distributed it.

"It confused the issue," Jamie said, "They thought we were asking for that ordinance and for things we hadn't asked for."

The confusion turned out to have a positive effect, however, because it stimulated debate and gave coalition members another chance to educate their community. "It led to a good discussion of the issues," Jamie said, "We got to answer a lot of questions."

In the meantime, the lobbying of city hall gives the coalition opportunities to educate their community through generated publicity. So far, the local newspapers, both the city daily and the county weekly, have printed several feature stories, and the largest regional newspaper in nearby St. Joseph ran a front-page story that they also featured on their website. In addition, the newspaper coverage, combined with press releases the coalition issued, helped generate two lengthy

radio interviews.

As of this writing, the Maryville city council has scheduled further testimony and invited all restaurant owners and tobacco prevention advocates to the city council meeting on February 24. Once again, coalition members plan to demonstrate a high level of community support.

One of Nodaway County's staunchest tobacco prevention advocates, unfortunately, will not be among the faithful. Following a long battle with Leukemia, Stephanie Erdman passed away last August. But her passion and commitment lives on in the energy of the coalition. Their accomplishments are her legacy. And if sometime in the near future the Maryville City Council follows the petition of the Citizens for a Smoke Free Nodaway County, Maryville could indeed be the very first town in Missouri to ban tobacco pollution inside all city restaurants. That's a Maryville Stephanie Erdman could see more than eight years ago. ■

Coming next issue . . .

**"Smokes
&
the City"**

*Saint Louis Tobacco
use prevention
advocates reach for the
keys to the Gateway City.*